Sweet Dreams by beeupsidedown (bookofreid)

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Summary:

Billy Hargrove only ever finds comfort in her voice. A 1 piece story.

Sweet Dreams

Billy sat quietly on the edge of his bed that morning. The house was empty, his parents having gone out to town and his step-sister running around with her small group of friends. He was alone, with nothing to do and no strength to even get dressed.

He sighed, his hand running over his face. He hadn't bothered to shower in days now, his oily hair proof of that. He knelt down beside his bed, his bare knee hitting the cold wooden floors. His hand reached for an old shoe box that rattled when he grabbed it and gently placed it on his bed. Without a second thought he grabbed the small Walkman that sat on his drawer and threw himself beneath his covers again.

Inside the shoe box were a handful of cassette tapes. Each were labeled with different dates, some labeled with book titles or clever mixtape names. He pulled one out that was simply labeled "Billy" and popped it in.

The sound of her voice soothed him immediately. If Billy had a say he'd claim it was the most beautiful voice in the world, one that no one could ever beat. He grinned as he listened to her speak as if she were there.

"Hey Billy. I'm going away for a while so I thought I'd make you a tape so you don't miss my beautiful voice," she chuckled." You really can't live without me, can you?"

Billy's lips tugged at her chuckle, her words holding more truth that she could imagine.

"I wish you could go with me. You know I hate these family vacations. Florida? Worst place in the world, Billy. All I ever get is a tan. Which I know you're a fan of."

Billy smiled as he listened to her rant about her disdain over the family trips. That's all these tapes really were. Just a bunch of nonsense that was meant to soothe him to sleep the way her voice usually would when she slept in his bed. He laid there, her voice his

sole salvation as he fought the feelings he had bottled up.

Before he knew it the tape had ended, her voice fading out to silence. His hand reached for the next tape, smiling as he realized it was the music mixtape she had made. It was full of awful pop and disco music that she adored. He constantly made fun of her music taste but she remained stubborn, insisting that Madonna was the epitome of all that was good.

He pushed play, listening to the cringeworthy beats and lyrics. Their music taste was night and day but he still respected her devotion to it. He listened, having long ago realized that each song was some form of “I love you” in musical form.

He fell asleep halfway through. His body was exhausted, his lack of sleep taking its toll. He rested, undisturbed and peaceful for a few hours. It wasn’t until a nasty nightmare woke him, its cruel images enough to shake him to his core. His hands desperately reached for the next tape, quickly pushing it in and hitting play.

This time it was a collection of her favorite poems. He listened to the way she read, her voice soft and full of adoration for every word she spoke. His heart returned to normal, the tears on his face beginning to dry.

“But we loved with a love that was more than love,” she paused for a moment, “Kind of like us, huh Billy?”

He found himself nodding in agreement although she couldn’t see him. They did love each other. That raw emotion was what had saved him from himself. She had taken him and showed him how to live without anger. She taught him to not let his experiences define him so negatively. She taught him to be kind, to be human. Her mere presence was enough to calm him even on his worst days, her kisses enough to let him know that life was worth living for.

She continued on reading, her voice filling his mind as he closed his eyes. He pictured her there, seated on the edge of his bed with a book in her hands. It was something he had various memories of, if only he could recreate it now.

“Alright Billy. I hope that was enough to get you through the night. I’ll see you when I get home.”

The tape came to an end and he simply laid there, drowning in silence. Finally his hand reached for another tape, grabbing hold of the newest one he had added to his collection just the week before.

He stared at it. The cassette box had been decorated with stickers and glitter along with doodles made in marker. It was nauseating, the amount of hearts that were drawn on. He pushed it in, listening to her voice once more.

“Hey Billy. Looks like it’s that time of year again. Where I go to hell and you get to listen to the same tape for two weeks straight.”

Billy turned in bed, pulling his covers closer to him. The sun was beginning to set now. He had spent all day in his room, his door shut to remain undisturbed.

“There’s no books or poems or amazing music this time,” she laughed, “no. This time I think I’ll just talk to you.”

His eyes closed as he pictured her there, her hair tangled as it spread across his pillows. He could see her smile, the sparkle in her eye always present when she looked at him.

“We just graduated. You know what that means? It’s time to plan our futures. Scary, right?”

Billy had given his future some thought by now. She was always it.

“I don’t know about you but I have some plans. I want to start an animal shelter. You know, the one I’ve always dreamt about?”

Billy thought back to their conversations. She was an avid animal lover and had helped out at the local shelter during her down time. She’d even convinced him to join her in the summer where he found his mood greatly improved by the company of stray dogs.

“We can start it together. I know you love it deep down,” she went on. “But that’s not all.”

“Billy Hargrove,” she said with a deep sigh. “I love you.”

“I love you too,” he said softly, his eyes shut tightly as his hands balled into fists, holding tightly to his blanket.

“My future is with you. I see us getting married. Can you imagine that?” she spoke softly. “I’d wear a big puffy dress, not so big that I can’t dance but big enough that you’d compare me to a cupcake.”

Billy released a choked laugh, tears beginning to build behind his eyes.

“And you’d wear a suit and look amazing. God, imagine you in something like that.” Her light laughter filled his ears. *“That’s something I can’t wait for.”*

A soft pause and a smack of her lips.

“We’d honeymoon in California. You’ll take me to all the beaches you always talk so much about. I’ll get so tan you won’t even recognize me.”

The thought of her at the beach was something he’d imagined before. It was something he’d always wanted to make a reality.

“And then we’d find a small home somewhere. Maybe raise a few kids and some dogs. If we have daughters I know you’ll spoil them rotten.”

The sound of the front door opening fell on deaf ears as he continued to listen.

“God, we have so much to do Billy. I adore you. You’re the only man I could ever love,” he could hear the smile in her voice. *“Pathetic, right?”*

She laughed and he could already see her shaking her head, a clear indicator that she was joking.

“I love you so much Billy. Don’t you dare forget about me while I’m on these trips.”

He couldn’t. He would never be able to forget about her. She had changed his world forever the minute she came into it. She was the good in his life, the reason he woke up in the morning and the one

girl he thought about at night.

“I’ll see you when I get home. I love you.”

Except she never came home.

A drunk driver had crashed into them on their way to the airport. The car had rolled, falling down the side of the mountain, each hit worse than the last. By the time the paramedics arrived she was gone.

This was all he had left of her. Her voice and her promises. Her dreams for their future that would never come.

He sobbed, his wails loud enough to fill the entire home. The walls of his bedroom had been punched through, his furniture kicked in with his pain. He cried, burying his face in his pillow as his face turned red and his knuckles white as they punched the mattress.

Max fought tears as she heard her brother’s cries. His pain flooded through her as she remembered how happy he had been. She recalled the way she’d always see her in his room, seated on his lap with a smile on her face. Billy had been *happy*. He had changed for the better because he found someone worth living for. And she had been taken in the blink of an eye.

Max sat outside of his door until his cries quieted down. Slowly she opened his door, scared of what she would find. Her heart shattered as she saw Billy in bed, his eyes puffy and his face red. He glanced at her and said nothing, instead choosing to stare up at the ceiling as he hid his sniffling.

She walked over to his bedside, placing all of the tapes back into their box. She left one out, the very first one marked “Billy.” He said nothing as she climbed into bed with him and gently pulled the Walkman out of his hands. She switched out the tapes and hit play, snuggling into his side as the voice he loved so dearly greeted him again.

“Hey Billy. I’m going away for a while so I thought I’d make you a tape so you don’t miss my beautiful voice. You really can’t live without me, can you?”